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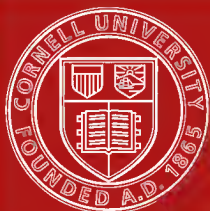
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RANDOM VERSE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Inn of the Silver Moon, 1900

The Last of the Knickerbockers, 1901

Myra of the Pines, 1902



R A N D O M V E R S E

By

Herman Knickerbocker Vielé



New York
BRENTANO'S
UNION SQUARE

1903

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FOREWORD

*As the wake of a wind that leaves whiter
For a moment the ways of the sea;
As the shadow of wings in their flight or
Of blossoms blind blown from the tree,
So have lingered the sins and their wages,
The sorrows that smarted and stung;
So passed and shall pass through the ages
The souls of the songs that are sung.*

*But the Spirit of Song, overladen
With burdens of mutable years,
Still as young as the tear of a maiden,
Still as old as the tribute of tears;
Though her footsteps grown feeble may falter,
Though her tombs and her temples be sealed,
She shall bear them as gifts to an altar,
Her fruits of the flock and the field.*

*And our children shall lisp to their mothers,
And our elders shall learn and believe
The songs of the first little brothers,
The hymns of the garden of Eve.
Re-create, re-incarnate, re-christened
Since the Maker of Melody stood
In the cool of the morning and listened,
And saw that the music was good.*

IN SÆCULA SÆCULORUM

“Behold, I shew you a mystery.”

They came from very far, they said—

Three poor spirits of the dead—

And the road was long and hard.

“Now let us rest

On the steps before the door.

See from east to west

The light grows more and more;

Soon the door will be unbarred.

Let us huddle close together,

For the air is cold;

Scarce of old

Have we known such bitter weather.

And when the key shall turn
And the great light burn
Far out across the gloom,
Let us go in together;
Let us stand
Hand in hand,
We children of the womb!
Let us feel,
As we kneel
In the Presence that we dread
(We poor spirits of the dead),
A touch of the dear clay,
Ere it melt away.
It will be daylight soon;
Far, far below
See there the old Earth glow
Beside the little moon."

Then as with eyes afraid
They watched them faint and fade
One after one,
Planets and suns untold
As lily buds that fold
Before the sun,
One spoke and said—
(The tallest of the dead),
“Brothers, ye twain
Come sure before your Lord
Claiming a just reward,
And without stain
May with proud heads unbared
Enter the Place Prepared
For the souls shriven.
I, in my slender pack,
Bring but my talent back

As it was given.
I have but dreamed and planned,
Shaping nor hewing,
Made not nor mended,
Till the last falling sand
Marked the time ended
Meted for doing.”

Then spoke the second of the dead—
Spoke low and shivered as he said,
“No thought had I nor any time for thought;
But seized each moment what the moment
brought.

So have my ships sailed far on many seas,
So have my towers risen to the skies,
And, as the summer hum of laboring bees,
My hives have sung of many industries.

And now too late
I, the unthinking clod,
Crouch here before the gate
Of my forgotten God.”

Now was the third made bold
To lift his head;
He least among the dead—
“My tale,” he said,
“Is brief and quickly told;
For I have neither dreams nor deeds to bring
A tribute to the King.
In life I suffered wrong and want and pain—
Perhaps I shall again.”

As on his breast the holy sign he made
The first said, “It is dawn.”

The second said, "I am afraid."

The last one said, "The bar is drawn!"

"Now hand in hand
Together let us stand,
And as our bodies fade,
Watching our souls remade
Enter the door;
Here shall the dear old clay
Crumble and melt away
For evermore.

"Come closer, closer, brother,
And let your hold be tight;
One may not see the other
Here in the blinding light.

The morning air grows colder,
A great wind chills my brow.
Press shoulder close to shoulder,
I scarce can feel you now."

They came from very far, they said—
Three poor spirits of the dead—
And the way was long and hard;
But now at last
All else was passed
And the great door stood unbarred;
Then did the three,
With eyes that strained to see,
Forgetting all before,
Behold one perfect soul
Pass to its goal
Across the door.

They made no mournful cry;
They asked not what it meant,
For each was well content—
And fading, each one murmured, “It is I.”

II

A BALLAD OF THE FIVE WITS

This is a thing ye have seen before—
A ferryboat plying from shore to shore,
 With freight of women and men;
Hope aloft in the pilot box
And salt sea under the dirty docks—
 Over and back again.
 Over and back again alway
 With the lifting lights of Everyday.

This is the thing ye have sometime heard—
The pitiless pulse of the whispered word
 Spoken for good or ill;
In lust of life or dream or dread

On forever till all be said,
Till the heart of a man be still.
Till sorrow and song no longer play
On the weary wires of Everyday.

This is the scent of a garden bed,
Where roses rotten and roses red
May mingle as life with death.
Here on the counters of musty mold
Green leaves turning at last to gold
Lie for a lingering breath.
Gather ye gold while yet ye may
Under the roses of Everyday!

This is a thing that your lips may know—
In the wafted wafer of stainless snow,
The breaking of bread unleaven;
In the thirsting sip from a wayside well,

The wine withholden to souls in Hell
Through wrath of the Lords of Heaven.
Kneel ye down and drink and pray
Lest ye miss the Mass of Everyday.

This is the thing ye have often felt—
A wrestling wind on the open veldt
Gone mad for a guerdon gained;
Gone mad in a race where the lands lie red
As the fields unfenced of a soul outspread
To the feet of a God unchained.
Watch ye well, on the windy way
Ye shall learn the lesson of Everyday!

TO FOLLOW THE FOX'S
TAIL, OH!

Oh, ye be they that follow the fox

Over the hill and dale, oh!

Through brown of bracken and flame of phlox,

With your crimson jackets and silver stocks,

To follow the fox's tail, oh!

My master sits at the Sign of the Spade,

Sipping his pot of ale, oh!

My mistress waits in the orchard shade

The lingering steps of her milking maid,

To the tune of a tinkling pail, oh!

My lover he battles the brave North Sea

In his ship of a single sail, oh!

Yet he fears no flaw for the sake of me,

Nor brawling breakers of land a-lee,

Nor grip of the growling gale, oh!

Oh, there's many to laugh and some to pray,
And many to weep and wail, oh!
And many there be to ride away—
Give you good sport, good sirs, to-day
That follow the fox's tail, oh!

STOP, THIEF!

Love sat down like a tired tinker,
Asking only a shady seat.
Feaster neither he was nor drinker,
Wine nor bread would he sip nor eat.

Love slept well in the April weather—
Laid him low where the sweet-fern grows;
Gold of gorse and the purple heather,
Pink of poppy and rose of rose.

Love stole off in the misty dawning,
Casting never a look behind;
Calling never a gay good morning,
Went his way where the white ways wind.

Ye who watch for the mad marauder,
Faring far with his gains ill got,
Stay Love's steps ere he cross the border,—
Love has stolen—I know not what.

THE MARIGOLD MOAT

Twin lights on the battlement burn!

Twin stars in a night blown fair,
As the eyes of a girl to her lover turn
Through the rime of her misty hair.

And twain in the marigold moat,
With a shimmer of white between;
Like a chrysolite clasp at a dead man's throat
Where the marigold leaves grow green.

In her canopied casement high
She sings, and the song is sweet,
Till a star drops out of the sky
To the fields that have kissed her feet.

And she nods to the nebulous night,
And laughs as the fair flame falls,
As a battleman stricken and slain in fight,
Or a leaf from her ivied walls.

Ah, Lady of Stars Dethroned,
Sing on, for the night is long!
And a landless lover by love disowned
To-morrow shall hear no song.

For twain are we in pride and pain
Till the tribute of time be told,—
Twain on the battlement height and twain
In the moat of the marigold.

BORDERLAND

And have you been to Borderland?

Its country lies on either hand

Beyond the river I-forget.

One crosses by a single stone

So narrow one must pass alone,

And all about its waters fret—

The laughing river I-forget.

Beneath the trees of Borderland

One seems to know and understand,

Beside the river I-forget,

All languages of men and birds;

And all the sweet, unspoken words

One ever missed are murmured yet

By that sweet river I-forget.

One hears there many things afar
From cities where strange peoples are,
 Beyond the river I-forget;
And stranger things are in the air,
But what they are one does not care,
 For Hope lies sleeping and Regret
 Beside the river I-forget.

Some day together hand in hand
I'll take you there to Borderland,
 Beyond the river I-forget;
Some day when all our dreams come true,
One kiss for me and one for you,
 We'll watch the red sun sink and set
 Across the river I-forget.

A HOROSCOPE

This purse, good Seer,
Shall give thee cheer
Of wine to drink to Love and Hope!
Venus and Jove
Together move—
You read it well, my horoscope!

Leo ascends;
The Moon befriends
The Planet of my natal day,
And stars benign
In sext and trine
Unite to guard my earthly way.

Wealth shall be mine,
As you divine;
Your sight is keen, your science nice.
My soaring soul
Shall reach its goal.
Tell me no more—it shall suffice!

Take back thy gold,
All is not told,
Nor yet shall be, the Wise Man saith.
I see afar
Another star.
Lo, Saturn in the House of Death!

HIGH VOICE AND LOW VOICE

High voice and low voice,
Soft voice and harsh,
In among the ivy leaves,
All along the marsh,
Singing together,
Swinging together,
Black bird and brown bird—
Folks of every feather.

High voice and low voice,
Deep voice and shrill,
Thro' the mellow meadowland,
On the windy hill,
Singing together,
Ringing together,
Oxen, sheep and kine—
Over heath and heather.

My voice and your voice,
Rough voice and sweet,
Up the busy boulevard,
Down the shady street,
Singing together,
Clinging together,
Your heart and mine—
Sad or sunny weather.

High voice and low voice,
Moon voice and star,
Just above the treetops—
Very, very far—
Singing together,
Swinging together,
Satellite and sun—
Upper world and nether.

OFF FINISTERRE

Our boat has a crimson sail,
And a white gull flies astern,
And the wind of the evening shall not fail
Till the beckoning bar lights burn.

Sing me a song, my dear,
To the rhyme of the rippling seas,
And the mounting moon shall hang to hear
From the paths of the Pleiades.

Where the red reefs rollick and ring
And the loverless landlights shine,
There's never a song for your lips to sing
And never a kiss for mine.

A BALLAD OF THE WHEAT

The sky is clear, I close my book:

Come, gaze across the growing wheat.

To Eastward and to Westward look,

Where plains of gold and azure meet.

Kiss me, Suzette, and in the kiss

We learn the lore of East and West,

That this is love and love is this,

The world old lesson of the nest.

No shadow falls on earth or sky—

The golden wheat stands shoulder high.

The blessed wheat! The good old sun

Shall turn to copper all its gold

Ere yet the web of June is spun,

Before the little birds are old.

And rain shall dim the placid skies

Where now the summer winds blow fair,
So time shall touch thy lovely eyes,
And dull the glory of thy hair.
What care have we for bye and bye?
The golden wheat stands shoulder high.

The poor and hungry shall be fed,
For them the golden harvest store.
Two sous shall buy a pound of bread,
That famine come not to the door.
And cruel winter times shall glow
With garnered mirth of laughing June,
When warm beneath our thatch of snow
We hear once more the robin's tune.
No shadow falls on earth or sky—
The golden wheat stands shoulder high.

L'Envoi

For thee at rest each golden lance,
For thee the golden pennons fly.
For thee, blest land of fertile France,
The golden wheat stands shoulder high.

W E T W O

We two and the wind and the rain.

We see no more the trees against the sky,
Nor any more the ruddy light that glowed
Within the ruts along the stony road.
What matter? it is only you and I,
Till day shall come again—
We two and the wind and the rain.

We two and the children of men.

Ah, how they chatter in the market place,
Coining their heart blood into greasy pence
For wine and myrrh, and apes and frankincense!
What matter? life must run along apace,
Till death shall come, and then—
We two and the children of men.

THE GOOD INN

What care if the day
Be turned to gray,
What care if the night come soon!
We may choose the pace
Who bow for grace
At the Inn of the Silver Moon.

Ah, hurrying Sirs,
Drive deep your spurs,
For it's far to the steepled town—
Where the wallet's weight
Shall fix your state
And buy for ye smile or frown
Through our tiles of green
Do the stars between

Laugh down from the skies of June,
And there's naught to pay
For a couch of hay
At the Inn of the Silver Moon.

You laboring lout,
Pull out, pull out
With a hand to the creaking tire,
For it's many a mile
By path and stile
To the old wife crouched by the fire.
But the door is wide
In the hedgerow side,
And we ask not bowl nor spoon
Whose draught of must
Makes soft the crust
At the Inn of the Silver Moon.

Then, here's to the Inn
Of the empty bin,
To the Host of the trackless dune!
And here's to the friend
Of the journey's end
At the Inn of the Silver Moon!

THE FONT IN THE FOREST

There's a prim little pond
At the Back of Beyond,
 And its waters are over your ears;
It's a sort of a tarn
Behind Robin Hood's Barn,
 Where the fish live a million years.

And the Mortals who drink
At its pebbly brink
 Are immediately changed into mullets,
Whose heads grow immense
At their bodies' expense,
 And whose eyes become bulbous as bullets.

But they willingly stay
Who have once found the way,
And they crave neither credit nor blame;
For to wiggle their tails
And to practise their scales
Is enough in the Fountain of Fame.

TO BEATRIX ASLEEP

So many merry varlets, russet clad,
On the fair marbles of a garden seat,
The idle minions of her brow were glad
Because of weathers and of winds blown sweet.
Between the sleepy sentinels of her eyes
They played a golden game of pitch and toss
With sunbeams coined and minted for the prize,
And laughing riot over gains and loss;
Until two playmates for a time left out
From hap and hazard that the rest made gay—
Two comrades romping-ready for the rout,
Protested for a sport where all might play.
Then did the garden ring with one acclaim
Begging her lips to nominate the game.

BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

The West Wind follows and the thistledown flies—

Catch who can, but you can't catch me!

Where be the ways where the winds are wise,

Oh, Love is afoot and the fields are free!

Down in the valley where the sweet sea sleeps,

The East Wind waits and he does not stir,

Till her light lids lift and her white breast leaps

And he work his will in the heart of her.

While the low lamps glimmer in the kingly keep,

Night for the wise in the wise old way;

But Love must scatter what Love shall reap

Where the Moon is merry and the winds at play.

A BARBECUE

There be twenty beggars before the door.

“They shall sup with me,” said King Bahram Ghor.

Ho! roast for them whole a royal stag;

And the thinnest throat in the rottenest rag

Shall quiver and strain itself to sing

Of the mercy of Bahram Ghor the King.

Now God be praised was ever before

A merrier monarch than Bahram Ghor!

Blind and rickety, crooked and stooped,
Limping and tottering, in they trooped.
Oh, carry the tidings to West and East
Of the merciful king and his merciful feast!

Had ever a creature on earth before
A heart as open as Bahram Ghor!

“But once have I known a goodlier gift,”
Said a ragged beggar without a shift,
“’Twas an ant I watched as I sat to beg,
Who gave to its fellows a locust’s leg—

Now God be praised, but the brute gave more
Than ever the good King Bahram Ghor!”

There be twenty beggars before the door.

“They shall sup with me,” said King Bahram Ghor.

THE WHITE COMPANY

Just on beyond the turning of the highway
I know the Pleasant People have their camp.
Pray what should I do, loitering on my way?
Your grimy game is duller than your lamp.
Their breezy tents are pitched upon the briarside,
Their hearts are warm for me as those of brothers.
Their dreams are not the drowsing of the fireside,
Their talk is not the droning of you others.

Just on across the river rings the merry note
Of laughing, and the music of their fête.
Pull harder there, you yokel of the ferryboat,
Pull strong, or even now I shall be late.
They are waving with their hands across the lily pads,
And my spirit pants impatient for the shore.
I'm weary of the idle chaff and silly fads
Of the stupid old companionships of yore.

Just on beyond the hill is their abiding place,
Its banners gleam at sunset in the West.
Ah, surely a retreat and not a hiding place,
Where all may see the castle from the crest.
Oh, they will come to welcome my descending feet,
And each will grasp me gaily by the hand.
Good bye, old fools, my journey's near its ending
 seat—
I go at last to them that understand.

DIE CINERUM

And what do men remember
 When winter nights are long?
And ears of deaf December
 Are dead to sigh and song;
When at the shaken portal
 No random friend shall rest
Till one, for all men mortal
 The last unwelcome guest.

When wraiths of winds grown crisper,
 Unheard in heath or hall,
May wail or weep or whisper,
 And silent cinders fall,
When from the failing taper
 The shivering shadows reel,
Shall sweet sins come to caper,
 Or good deeds come to kneel?

What sad or sunny weather,
 What night, or noon, or morn,
What laugh amid the heather,
 Or tear beneath the thorn?
What fire or flame or ember,
 What song or story told,
Do the old dead remember
 When men no more are old?

I S E R V E

Oh, the Soul of the World was sorry,
And it sang to the Soul of Mars,
“My brother in space, you give me grace,
You least of the lesser stars.
I am glorious, great and golden,
You are meager and mean and red,
But you bid Death yield to your sanguine shield,”
So the Soul of the sad World said.

“I am hung with my purple mountains,
I am wrapped in my silver sea.
Of a shimmering sheen is my robe of green,
And the Sun doth envy me.
I am wise with the wit of the sages,
I flash with their flags unfurled.
Yet I faint with fear as the end draws near,”
Said the Soul of the sad old World.

And the Spirit of Mars made answer,
"Oh, Monarch of Mire and Mud,
I bear no shield with a crimson field,
But a red cup, red with blood.
The blood of the tears and the travail
Of the men of a million stars:
With their tears and sweat are my garments
wet,"
Said the merciful Spirit of Mars.

"Though the wine of my cup be bitter
With gall of your greed and guilt,
Till it moveth aright in the High God's sight
There shall never a drop be spilt,
Till every star shall be golden,
And never a one be red.
I wait the chime of the High God's time,"
So the Soul of His Servant said.

J E R M Y N S T R E E T

London lights are red and yellow

In the smoke black London night—

Dark and cold the London night!

Cries the cabman to his fellow

Where the ruddy lamps are bright,

“Rough on lungs and rough on throats!”

While the horses munch their oats—

In the damp

Underneath the ruddy lamp.

There's a dream of draggled dresses

In the fog framed London night—

Brown and black as London night

With the pavement's foul caresses

Where the lamps are red and bright.

Tinsel toys at easy barter,
Plume and perfume, glove and garter,
In the damp
Underneath the ruddy lamp.

There's a sound of some one singing
In the sodden London night—
Joyless as the London night,
Twangs a banjo sharply ringing
Where the red lamp sheds its light.
“Give us bread,” its bitter burden,
“Bread, bread, bread, our only guerdon!”
In the damp
Underneath the ruddy lamp.

There's a thing for sport and spurning
In the leaden London night—
Loathsome in the London night,

With two glassy eyes upturning
 Redder than the ruddy light.
Though the arch be dark and dank it
Misses not the stolen blanket,
 In the damp
 Underneath the ruddy lamp.

Jesu mercy for thy creatures
 In the weary London night —
 Groping in the London night ;
Palsied palms and faded features
 Raised toward the yellow light,
Lest they, faint with fruitless labor,
Turn to Death their friend and neighbor —
 In the damp
 Underneath the ruddy lamp.

OUT OF THE DEEP.

No man hath greater love, God said,
Than he who gives his life in his friend's stead.
And yet—I am a madman, as ye know,
And yet—in one red moment long ago,
I yielded for her need
More than God's meed.

It so befell,
That on the brink of Hell
She stood afraid;
She that was made
Fairer than stars at sea,
When summer evenings be.

It happened so,
In that mad murderous moment long ago,

The kind God gave me grace
To take her place.

God gave me grace to give
More than all men that live.
More than the dreaming dead —
So hath God said.

And when the High God laughs, seeing her
there,
Will she know, will she care,
Will the Cherubim whisper, the Seraphim tell,
That a madman is happy in Hell?

VICTORIA

Bear her, the good old Queen,
 With dirge and knell;
Under the Red and Green
 She shall sleep well,
 In vaulted nave or cloister shady.
There, where the hearts of men
 Soften nor harden,
Bring back her dust again,
 Back to God's garden.
 In pace requiescat; good rest, good lady.

And when the tuneful tongue
 Tells of her glory,
Thus be the saga sung—
 Be this the story,
 In camps of fyrd and camps of foeman,

Once in the yawning years
Then did the nations
Mingle their tithe of tears,
Join lamentations,
Over the shrouding sheet of one good woman.

So, as with one accord,
Homage they gave her,
Each to his altar lord
Praying God save her.
Tried by the test of Time, Time the refiner,
Ashes the tinsel throne,
The scepter riven,
Gold is the love alone
That she has given,
Mother of multitudes—Salve Regina!

T O R. L. S.

Died December, 1894

There is naught that is new, saith the Preacher;
Death is old,
Love is cold,
And the hate of the gods for the creature
Waxes dull as the æons unfold.

Who shall find a new gem in the shingle,
Tempest driven,
Storm riven,
Where the foams of the centuries mingle
And the seekers of jetsom have striven?

He alone of the searchers, he only,
In the rift
Of the drift,
With torn hands uncompanioned and lonely,
Could the pearls from the nothingness sift.

O finder of infinite treasure!
For the spoil
Of thy moil,
Is it grateful, the respite of leisure
That comes with the surcease of toil?

At rest are the tireless fingers
Which for us
From the dross
Picked the marvelous beauty that lingers
But to tell us anew of our loss.

Sleep well in thy ocean-bound island!

Sleep and rest

Clothe thy breast.

Blow gently, thou gale of the Highland,

Sigh softly, thou wind of the West.

Weep low o'er the bier of thy Master,

Salt breeze

Of the seas,

With the sound of thy sport or disaster,

Disturb not his limitless ease.

God hath granted thy guerdon, my brother,

And the head

Cold and dead

Bears the mystical crown, and none other,

And the bays on thy coffin are spread.

And the tears and the prayers of a planet,
Which start
From the heart,
Reach over the distance and span it
From us to the Land where thou art.

IV

VÆ VICTIS

The father of Fear looked far and wide
Out over the whirling world,
And he said to his shivering slave beside,
“Wherever my first-born son doth ride,
E’en there is his flag unfurled—
Is his falconed flag unfurled.
From the lair of the beast in the cavernous East
To the tottering town where the moon went down
As the reek of its rafters curled.

“To-morrow he turns to his throne again;
Or ever his train draws near
Ye shall hear the chime of his captive’s chain,

Ye shall mark the bells on his bridle rein,
And the gleam of his glittering gear—
The glint of his golden gear.”

Said the slave, “Will he bring the Mammonite
King?

Will he tether with cords the Lucifan Lords?”

“As I live,” said the father of Fear.

“He will come to his harvest home, my thrall,
To the whine of the weighted wain,
With the rape of the rose on the wayside wall,
And the garnered grain of the seneschal,
And the millet of murderous Cain—
The curse of his kinsman Cain.
For the sons of the scythe have given their tithe,
And the oafs of the axe have wrought their tax
In travail and toil and pain.”

“My Liege, hath the mowing an aftermath,
Or be it that dead men ride?
Who is it that crosses the barlight’s path?
Who braves the bite of the wet wind’s wrath,
And the might of the moaning tide—
The trough of the teeming tide?
Who is it that leaps on the headland steeps?
As I hope for grace, but your son must face
The pikes of the Prince of Pride!”

“The pikes that you see are pines, my fool,
For the Prince of Pride is dead.
He hath riven the robe of his ruthless rule,
He hath broken the bells of his tinsel tool;
He hath bitten his bridal bed—
His bier and his bridal bed.
In the direful dust of his lawful lust

He hath given his life by his wailing wife
With the sins of his soul unshed."

"Who is it that rides so far, my Sire,
Who is it that rides so fast?
By the stealthy stars and the fainting fire,
He marks not marsh and he marks not mire
Till the foam of the ford be passed—
Till the frolicking ford be passed.
He hath rimmed the ridge of the battlement bridge,
He hath taken the track, and the fyrds fall back
At the blare of his bugle blast!"

"Some bowman bleeding and burnt, my clown,
Death dragged from the ditch of dead,
Who were better to drop on the dismal down
Than tempt the taunts of the taverned town

That wait for his rags of red,
For his pitiful rags of red,
Than ask for alms with his pleading palms,
In girdle and gyve to leaven alive
The lump of the blood-brown bread.”

“A planet has come to its post, my Thane,
A beryl of blickening bars,
As a lustral lamp thro’ a painted pane,
As the neomene moon in a rime of rain,
It hangs in the house of Mars—
In the hideous house of Mars,
And I see by the light a visorless knight,
His ’scutcheon glows with argent and rose,
And his eyes are as shining stars.”

“Were his silver shield a field of flame
He shall find no friend, my fag.
Tho’ strong his sinew and sure his aim
He shall sup in sorrow and sleep in shame
As the minions of morning lag—
As the merciless moments lag.
For the Rajah of Rage has gotten his wage,
And the Tartarous Tribes have taken the bribes
In the fight of the Falconed Flag.”

“He has come to the garrison gate, my Chief,
He has come to the guarded grill.
As the palsied plumes of a shaken sheaf
Are the shivering spears of the last relief—
As the wheat of a wind-swept hill—
As the waves of a windward hill.”
“His bones shall bleach on the blistering beach

Where the craven cat grows fierce and fat,
And the fox shall find his fill.

“Will ye watch till he come to the church, my slave,
For there shall his falchion fail.

Though men be mighty and boys be brave,
Who fence with Fear in the night-hung nave
Shall travel to tell no tale—
Shall tattle and tell no tale.

Tho’ he bate not breath, tho’ he dread not death
The hottest chase shall halt its pace
When it come to the altar rail.”

“He has come to the door of the church, my King,
He has come to the Doomsday Door.
And the Bishop walks in rochet and ring
With his hands outspread in welcoming,

And the nuns go on before—
The Nazarite Nuns before . . . ”
“Now toll the bell in heaven and hell,
And furl the flag on crest and crag—
For Fear shall ride no more.”

v

THE THREE KINGDOMS

As sowers o'er some furrowed field

 Their strong brown fingers dip and swing,
Till all the pathway of their feet
Is sweet with smell of scattered wheat,
 And the glad motherhood of Spring
Sings pregnant promise of the yield,

So, bounteous from our lifting bows,

 We broadcast spread a silver seed
Across the tillage of the sea,
Whose garnering perchance shall be,
 Though not of meadow land or mead,
Meet measure for the tithing-house.

Look yonder where the last lights fall
 Athwart the long, low, leeward land,
There rises in menacing mass
The pharos of a man of brass
 With helmet and uplifted hand,
That marks the mole of Wearyall.

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Once on an evening long ago,
 Between those brazen feet outspread,
Three stout ships drifting side by side
Rodé out upon the seaward tide,
 Fainted and faded, rose and red,
Into the golden afterglow.

And ever came in rift refrain
 The sound of singing in the East,
Too brave to bless, too sweet to ban,

A mingled song of maid and man
That rose and rang and sank and ceas'd—
And homing sea-birds piped again.

Then said the Warden of the Wall,
“God’s grace go with them, for they seek
The laureled Land of No Man Born,
Where grapes are gathered of the thorn,
And strong bear burden for the weak
As men do not in Wearyall.

“There where the pleasant islands rise
At twilight, when the wakened stars,
By salt sea spray washed wan and white,
Float skyward through the Autumn night,
They go to rive the rusted bars
That guard the gate of Paradise.

“They go to rouse the drowsy dead,
And build above the dust of Cain
Three Kingdoms: twain of Love, and Art,
And one that shall be—Merry Heart,
Till the great Tree bear fruit again.
God’s grace go, too,” the Warden said.

As evening drew the purple pall
Above the waxen face of day
“Eternal Rest,” the West Wind cried—
“Perpetual Light,” the East replied,
But recked they not to praise or pray
Who threw them down in Wearyall.

So through the wavering woof of task
Swept to and fro the weft of toil,
Till, touched with tinsel thread of tears,

Black weeks were woven into years
And men in marts of wine and oil
Of the three ships forgot to ask.

Full fifty times the Wind of Birds
Brought back the bittern to his haunt,
When seamen, buffeted of gales,
Came on a day with travelers' tales
Of island tribesmen, old and gaunt,
Who babbled toothless foolish words.

"This," a sad senile chieftain cried,
Who dived for limpets in a pool,
"Is the fair Land of Merry Heart,
And yonder lies the Isle of Art,
Whose King is but a driveling fool—
The Isle of Love is by its side."

Then, mocking him, the sailors swore
The place an Eden, and would hear
If the twin islands fared as well.
“Ah, that,” he whined, “we cannot tell,”
And shook the remnant of a spear,
“In sooth the Kingdoms are at war!”

So, as the lengthening shadows fall,
Across the mole, across the mart,
When maids beneath the man of brass
Watch wistfully the slow ships pass
Men cry, “What ho for Merry Heart!”
And laughing turn to Wearyall.

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Now bounding to the bo'swain's call,
The night watch makes the halyards fast,
For the mad waves in fearful sport
Leap up to starboard and to port—
But welcome wave and wind and blast
That wafts us not to Wearyall!

